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NEWS RELEASE

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TWENTY-ONE DEFENDANTS LOCATED IN THE FRESNO AND BAY AREAS INDICTED BY A FRESNO GRAND JURY FOR FILING FALSE TAX RETURNS WITH THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

FRESNO - United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott and IRS CID Acting Special-Agent-in-Charge Diane Carter announced today that a federal grand jury in Fresno indicted twenty-one defendants from the Fresno and Bay Areas in separate indictments for filing false tax returns with the Internal Revenue Service and Bank Fraud. Those indicted were:

ANDRE DESHUN BELL, 27, of Oakland, NATASHA DENYELL BELT, 23, of Fresno, WAQUILLA NICOLE BROWN, 29, of Oakland, SHIRLEY ANN CARTHLEDGE, 47 of Fresno, CARL LEE CONLEY, JR, 25, of Hanford, PATRICIA ANN DIXON, 30, of Fresno, ZINO NOYAL ECHOLS, 20, of Fresno, LESLIE ANN FLOURNOY, 21, of Fresno, CASSANDRA ANN HARRELL, 53, of Fresno, TORIE MONIQUE HOUSE, 25, of Fresno, GEORGE LEE, JR., 31, of Sacramento, LEONDRUS McBRIDE, 19, of Fresno, OLIVIA BELVA MILLETT, 21, of Hayward, CHRISTOPHER CALVIN MITCHELL, 26, of Fresno, ALLEN RANDLE, 36, of Oakland, CHRISTINA JENINE SANDERS, 21, of Fresno, LAQUITA NASHA SCHINK, 22, of Fresno, ERIC MARQUIS TEMPLE, 24, of Fresno, TYLEE DARLENE WARFIELD, 23 of Fresno, GIOVANNA TYREKA WARREN, 22, of Oakland, CRISSY HELENA WILSON, 21, of Oakland.

This case is a product of an extensive investigation conducted by the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Intelligence Division.

According to Assistant United States Attorneys Stanley A. Boone and Mark E. Cullers, who are prosecuting the cases, the scheme involved the filing of false tax returns with the Internal Revenue Service and then obtaining bank loans from those tax returns. The defendants perpetrated the fraud by acquiring false W-2s which listed their true name and social security number but listed a false employer, wages and withholding for the pertinent tax year. The defendants then took the false W-2s to a tax preparation business in order to prepare false tax returns, claiming refunds based primarily on Earned Income Credit Income Credit, a low income subsidy for working taxpayers. The fraudulent tax returns were then electronically filed with the IRS in Fresno, California. After the filing of the returns, the defendants then applied for bank loans using their tax return refunds as collateral for the loan. When the IRS held the defendants' false returns, the bank were then not paid on their loans.

According to Scott, “Tax refunds schemes of this magnitude will not be tolerated and will be vigorously prosecuted. These schemes undermine the tax collection process for all of those who pay their taxes.”

Each defendant faces a maximum of five years imprisonment on false claims counts and 30 years on the bank fraud counts. However, the actual sentence will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables, and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.

The charges are only allegations and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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